

Public Works Committee
Minutes, September 6, 2011
Town Room, Town Hall

Committee: Steve Braun (Chair), Mike Cann, Christine Gray-Mullen, Charlie Moran, Guilford Mooring (Superintendent). Not present: Don George.

Also attending: Eric Berkowitz, Alan Bonneau, Peggy Brownell, Walter Carroll, Mindy Domb, Orrin Clifford, Joseph Horowitz, Patrick Kelly, Katie Naughton, Ann Maggs, Marcy Melcher, Sigurd Nilsen, Peggy Matthews-Nilsen, Philip Parks, Tammy Parks, Svetlana Prokofiev, David Refermat, Karen Skolfield, Kathleen Teagno, Donald Teagno, Amy Vickers.

1. Administrative

Minutes of the June 7 meeting approved 3-0-1 (one absent)

Next meeting dates: October 11; November 8; December 6.

2. Project updates from the Superintendent. Paving of streets being re-done via the bond issue is almost done; driveway and curb work still to be done. Atkins roundabouts construction is ahead of schedule. Spring Street parking lot will be done by October. Main Street will be done next year. We have money from CDBG for the section of Main Street between Northeast Street and South Whitney; doing the rest will depend upon further funding from next year's CDBG allocation. Results of tropical storm Irene were modest: flooding on Pelham Road at Pickering's, on East Leverett Road near the bridge, and a section of Station Road. Rte 9 did not flood this time.

PWC-related items on the docket for Fall Town Meeting: accept Sunrise Avenue (dead end) as a town-owned street. A few right-of-way issues; easements for Snell St. and Pelham Road bridges.

3. Old Business

a) Update on subcommittee (Moran and Gray-Mullen) formed to interface with consultant charged with review of Town roadways. Committee has not yet been formed; contract has not been let. The committee will work as a liaison with the consultant and will consist of six members: Mr. Moran and Ms. Gray-Mullen, two members of the Planning Board, and two from the Public Transportation Committee. The full liaison Committee is still being formed. Once in place, it will develop an RFP and begin the process of selecting a consultant.

b) Update from the Superintendent on work by consultant on plans to extend the Town's sewer system to Amherst Woods. Consultant has been hired, almost finished, and until last week they were on schedule. See further discussion later in these minutes.

4. New Business

a) Discussion of Rambling Road/Country Corners Road traffic that results from work on the two roundabouts at Atkins Corner.

Superintendent Mooring gave some background: Mass Highway (MH) says that they are ahead of schedule. The south roundabout is 90% complete, the loop road is prepared to open, and bike paths are in place. The truck ramp is yet to be built and the connection to West Bay Road needs to be finished. Starting sometime in September the loop road will be the primary detour, making it unnecessary for drivers to use the Country Corner/Rambling Road detour. Both roundabouts will be ready next spring.

The reason residents of Country Corner/Rambling Road were not informed of the detour in a timely manner was miscommunication between Mass Highway and the Town. Notices did not go out until Wednesday, Sept. 1; the Town had notices ready to go earlier, and the police department was ready to do its work, but the miscommunication caused the Town to hold back on the notices and police detail. There were supposed to be two detours—trucks detoured to Rte 47, car traffic through Country Corner/Rambling Road. But this did not happen.

Resident David Refermat said that we have to do something before someone gets hurt. The volume and speed of traffic is horrific. There are no signs, and no police presence prior to an auto accident. After the accident, there was police presence for 48 hours, resulting in 9 citations for speeding. Mr. Refermat argued for the immediate barricading of the intersection of Country Corners Road and Rte. 116. Even though the loop road will open and be the official detour, he argued, people now know the Country Corners/Rambling Road detour and will continue to use it.

Other residents of the neighborhood spoke, reinforcing Mr. Refermat's remarks. Some felt misinformed, left out of the loop. Some felt that barricades had been promised but then not installed. Superintendent Mooring responded that he had advocated for the barriers but that the present Town Manager and Chief of Police wanted signage instead of barriers.

Residents asked about long-term solutions. What happens after the barriers are removed? Stephen Braun suggested that, for long-range solutions, residents determine what they want and bring their request to PWC as new business. He noted that speed humps like those now on Sunset Avenue and McClellan can be installed without going through the state, but that a reduction in the speed limit or the posting of "no through traffic" signs must be documented and presented to the State Department of Transportation—a long process.

After the discussion it was

Moved: The PWC recommends that a full-width temporary barrier be installed for at least 1 month at the intersection of Route 116 and Country Corners Road to help divert currently dangerous through-traffic resulting from construction in the vicinity of Atkins Farms." Voted 3-0-1.

Moved: **That Potholes on Rambling Road and Country Corners Road be given high priority on the Public Works Department pothole list.** Voted: 3-0-1.

Sewer Extension, Amherst Woods discussion.

Stephen Braun began the discussion by saying that PWC had no standing in the matter, given its charge. He noted that the Select Board was the Sewer Commissioners, and that PWC had no voice in any deliberations around matters related to Town sewer and water service. We were glad to listen, however, and advise, if not as a Town committee, then as Town citizens.

Residents of Amherst Woods spoke of feeling left out of the process that the consultant has been engaged with. They said they favored the extension being paid for by the town as a whole, as was the case in funding a sewer extension in the Mechanic Street area some years ago.

Chairman Braun noted that the issue of who pays for sewer extensions is not clear-cut. Some municipalities fund such work as part of the general operating budget (or bond) while others pass some, or all, of the cost to those residents who directly benefit from the extension. Clearly the residents would want the ratepayers to pay; perhaps the ratepayers would want the residents to pay.

Superintendent Mooring reported that the new study of the Town's sewer system, by Campbell, Dresser, and McKee, is practically complete and should be on the Select Board's desks by their next meeting. The process will begin with the Select Board: when they accept the report as final, the report will become public and the subject of public discussion. The discussion should be complete in time for recommendations based on the report to come to Fall Town Meeting.

The Committee then moved to a discussion of its charge. It was agreed that the charge as now in the Town bylaws was not as clear as it might be. Chairman Braun offered to review the relevant portion of the bylaws and suggest edits to clarify the situation. The edits will be discussed at a later meeting.

Based on this discussion, it was Moved: **That PWC takes no position on any matters related to the sewer extension to Amherst Woods, because this matter lies outside its charge.** Voted: 4-0 (one absent).

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlie Moran, Sec'y pro tem.